

Camera comprising an automatic focusing device

INB A17

The invention relates to a camera comprising:

- a lens system for focusing the image of a subject on a sensitive plate,
- an image processing device utilizing filters for performing an image compression transformation,
- 5 - a control system acting on the lens system to ensure a sharp image of the subject on the sensitive plate, the system comprising at least a first high-pass image filter and a first low-pass image filter in the form of summers of the results of the compression transformation.

The invention also relates to a focusing method for a camera.

10 The invention finds its application in digital cameras.

To obtain a proper focusing and thus a sharp image it is known that the transitions in the image are analyzed because they are often more abrupt on the subject to be photographed than on the background. It is estimated that the focal distance of the lens of the camera is optimal when the transitions in the image are the most abrupt.

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The present invention proposes a camera for which the focusing is effected in a simple manner without needing too much additional material.

Therefore, such a camera is characterized in that said image filters utilize the filters of the image-processing device.

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A focusing method utilized in a camera that comprises an image processing circuit in the form of high-pass and low-pass image filters is characterized in that it comprises the following steps:

- estimation of the value of the output of at least one of said high-pass filters,
- 25 - normalization of this value by means of the value of the output of a low-pass filter,
- control of the focusing system with a view to obtaining a maximum value of the normalized signal,

- release for taking the photo if the normalized value exceeds a certain threshold.

INS A2 >

The idea of the invention is to take advantage of the calculations necessitated by the image compression technique known by the name of "wavelet technique" as mentioned in the standard JPEG 2000 to obtain the automatic focusing. The wavelet technique is well known. On this subject may be consulted European patent document EP 0 944 263 which mentions the new standard of image compression JPEG 2000.

These and other aspects of the invention are apparent from and will be elucidated with reference to the embodiment described hereinafter.

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INS A3 >

In the drawings:

Fig. 1 represents a camera according to the invention and

Fig. 2 represents a function flow chart of the apparatus according to the

15 invention.

INS A4 >

Fig. 1 represents an apparatus 1 according to the invention. This apparatus is formed by a lens 5 which focuses the images on a sensitive surface 7 of the CCD sensor type. The focal distance of the lens may change under the influence of a motor 8 controlled by a control circuit 9, so that the subject 10 placed in front of a background 12 can appear sharply on the sensitive surface 7. This surface is analyzed by an analysis circuit 13 to produce information about the various pixels that form the information. These pixels are then processed for performing image compression by an image processor 14, which utilizes a wavelet transformation. Image filters 15, 16, 17 and 18 are realized in that the results of the wavelet transformation are summed in a simple fashion. After compression, the captured image is stored in a memory device 20.

According to the invention the presence of these image filters is made use of for obtaining the focusing that ensures the clarity of the subject on the sensitive surface 7. This may be derived from information coming from a low-pass image filter 15 and a high-pass filter 16. A sharp subject creates distinct transitions which make a contribution to the output of the high-pass filters, whereas the background situated farther away remains blurred and its contribution is thus less. All these filters may be one or two-dimensional.

From these four summers 15, 16, 17 and 18 are established four parameters: α , β , χ and δ respectively, which relates to the luminance data Y:

$$\alpha = \sum_{LF} Y$$

$$\beta = \sum_{H-HF} Y$$

$$5 \quad \chi = \sum_{V_{HF}} Y$$

$$\delta = \sum_{HF} Y$$

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$$\text{HF}_c = \frac{\beta + \chi + \delta}{\alpha}$$

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which is indicated by box K3. If this value is lower than this threshold, the maximum value taken by the value HHF_c is examined (box K4):

$$\text{HHF}_c = \frac{\beta}{\alpha}$$

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$$VH_c = \frac{\chi}{\alpha}$$

If this value reaches a higher value than threshold S3, the photo is recorded (box K3), if not, a message or any other indicator signals that the focusing cannot be performed (box K10).

Obviously, the described processing is preferred on part of the image situated in the center of the sensitive surface 7, which facilitates the use of the apparatus.

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